

The Young Men in the Streets of “Pockets of Peace”:  
The Feasibility of Obtaining Data through Cell Phone Journals  
**Hadyatoullaye Sow, Tamara Leech, Amy Irby-Shasanmi**  
Department of Public Health, Fairbanks School of Public Health, IUPUI  
Indiana University-Purdue University Indianapolis

This project is an extension of a study by Dr. Tamara Leech called “Pockets of Peace,” which examines certain Indianapolis communities that, despite high rates of concentrated disadvantage, exhibit low rates of youth violence. The following research focuses on the methods, incentives, and logistics needed to recruit and retain young men most at risk for violence in these communities. To understand the reasons for resilience or nonresilience, 28 participants in both pockets and non-pockets were provided iPhones. Using these iPhones, they completed biweekly surveys regarding their experiences, their neighborhoods, and the violence that does or does not define them. Participants had their phone plans paid for the duration of the study and were provided \$25 gift cards per monthly meeting they attend, wherein they were granted the opportunity to elaborate on survey responses. Participation rates tell an interesting story. The sample size and the engagement of the participants fluctuated weekly; yet, the average participation rate, which considers the number of participants expected to complete the survey and the actual number of surveys completed, ranged from 70% to 95% per survey. After two missed surveys, participants’ phones were shut off, as an incentive for them to complete surveys consistently. While some of the young men fail to do so, significant data was gathered from completed surveys and monthly meetings. There are no better experts on youth violence in Indianapolis than the youth themselves. The participants’ cell phone journals provide qualitative meaning to researchers’ quantitative data by recording perspectives and stories that contextualize the statistics. Simultaneously, participants benefit materially and also gain a sense of purpose from contributing to the betterment of their community.

Mentor: Tamara Leech, Department of Public Health, Fairbanks School of Public Health, IUPUI

Contact:

Hadya Sow ([hsow@iupui.edu](mailto:hsow@iupui.edu))

Tamara Leech ([tleech@iu.edu](mailto:tleech@iu.edu))